

Find True North:

Harnessing Attention
in an Era of Distraction



TORCH Annual Conference
April 19, 2017
presented by Geoffrey Tumlin

Find True North: Focus in an Age of Distraction

1. Know our vulnerabilities
2. Create time for deep, focused work
3. Let go for insight
4. Roll-up: Learn from brain science, or grandma
5. Bring some Zen to the country
6. ESQ for motivation under uncertainty
7. Learn lessons from the King and lottery winners
8. Be an adjective, or many nouns

When we speak of an information-rich world, we may expect that the wealth of information means a death of something else—a scarcity of whatever it is that information consumes.

What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients. **Hence a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention.**

Herbert A. Simon, 1971

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Age of Distraction: The Numbers

____: Avg daily screen time for US teens & tweens

____: Number of times the avg person touches smart phone daily

____: Number of smartphone sessions by avg person daily

____: Est. time required to get deep into something

____: Avg length btw self-distractions for US workers

____: Percentage of execs who know most important work priority

____: Percentage of execs who said they were able to work on their most important priority last week

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Age of Distraction: The Numbers

9 hours: Avg daily screen time for US teens & tweens

(Source: Common Sense Media, 2015)

2617 times: Number of times the avg person touches smart phone daily

76 sessions: Number of smartphone sessions by avg person daily

(Source: Dscout study, 2015)

23 minutes: Est. time required to get deep into something

3-6 minutes: Avg length btw self-distractions for US workers

(Source: Studies by Gloria Mark at UC Irvine)

____ : Percentage of execs who know most important work priority

____ : Percentage of execs who said they were able to work on their most important priority last week

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Age of Distraction: The Numbers

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2617 times: Number of times the avg person touches smart phone daily

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(Source: Dscout study, 2015)

23 minutes: Est. time required to get deep into something

3-6 minutes: Avg length btw self-distractions for US workers

(Source: Studies by Gloria Mark at UC Irvine)

100%: Percentage of execs who know most important work priority

10%: Percentage of execs who said they were able to work on their most important priority last week

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2. **Create time for deep, focused work**
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2. Create Time for Deep, Focused Work

- A. Give yourself 60-90 good minutes per day
 - In two chunks, if possible
- B. Start with what's hardest
 - Figure it out day prior
- C. Eliminate social media from any device you use to think deeply
 - And don't use the Internet for breaks
- D. Hack your brain at night
 - Careful of mental overstimulation before bed

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3. Let Go for Insight

- ▶ Mann Gulch, Wag Dodge, & insight

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3. Let Go for Insight

- ▶ Mann Gulch, Wag Dodge, & insight

- ▶ Insight's Texas 2-step:
 - 1. Work the problem, then
 - 2. Step back from it

w/deep focus

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3. Let Go for Insight

► Structure your environment for focused work,
and then insight:

- A. Rotate between your projects
- B. Surge instead of grind
- C. Hack your brain at night (from deep learning)
- D. Jack around in the morning

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4. Focus Roll-Up: Learn From Brain Science, or Grandma

- A. 60-90 minute blocks
- B. Do what's hardest first
- C. Rotate between projects
- D. No social media where work gets done
- E. Take real breaks
- F. Hack your brain at night
- G. Jack around in the morning

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5. Bring Some Zen to the Country

- ▶ Stockdale paradox (by Collins)

- ▶ Bill Parcells:
 - Blame No One
 - Expect Nothing
 - Do Something

- ▶ Can you cultivate a habit that reliably clears your mind?

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6. ESQ for Motivation Under Uncertain Conditions

- ▶ E is for ERCA

- ▶ S is for Saying

- ▶ Q is for Question

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6. ESQ for Motivation Under Uncertain Conditions

- ▶ E is for ERCA
 - Evidence, Relevance, Consequence, Action
- ▶ S is for Saying
 - Rumor, belief, fact
- ▶ Q is for Question
 - Netflix question 1:
 - Netflix question 2:

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7. Learn Lessons from the King and Lottery Winners

- ▶ $H = .5S + .1C + .4V$
- ▶ I'll be happy when...
- ▶ King, lottery, anti-lottery, celebrities

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7. Learn Lessons from the King and Lottery Winners

1. In general, I consider myself:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not a very happy person Neutral A very happy person

2. Compared to most of my peers, I consider myself:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Less happy Neutral More happy

3. Some people are generally very happy. They enjoy life regardless of what is going on, getting the most out of everything. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all Neutral A great deal

4. Some people are generally not very happy. Although they are not depressed, they never seem as happy as they might be. To what extent does this characterization describe you?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Not at all Neutral A great deal

17, Source: Lyubomirsky, S. and Lepper, H.S. (1999). A measure of subjective happiness. *Social Indicators Research* 46 (2)137-155. Avg score: 4.8, SD 1.0, normal range 3.8-5.8.



8. Be an Adjective, or Many Nouns

- ▶ 3D identities bend, but don't break
 - Tom Landry's long walk
 - Kids, POWs, and resilience

8. Be an Adjective, or Many Nouns

1. What do you hope people will say when you're gone?
 - From your hospital:
 - From earth:
2. What do they say about you now?
3. Will you consider the legacy one-&-one?
 - One value:
 - One person:

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gtumlin@ondemandleadership.com